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DECISIONS TO PROMOTE THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE CONVENTION

COMMUNICATIONS BY PARTIES

Process for review and schedule for submission of national communications
from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties, at its first session (COP 1), by its decision 2/CP.1,¹ has established the process for the review of first communications from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (hereinafter referred to as "Annex I Parties"), including provisions for the in-depth review of first national communications from such Parties. In its decision 3/CP.1, the COP provided guidance on the preparation and submission of national communications from Annex I Parties. Decision 4/CP.1 provided guidance on methodological issues. This note reports on the secretariat activities as a follow-up to these decisions in accordance with Article 8.2(d) of the Convention. It also contains suggestions for action by the COP.

B. Scope of the note

2. The present note describes the organization of the review process and documents the progress made with regard to in-depth reviews of the first national communications from Annex I Parties, updating information contained in the previous progress report (FCCC/SB/1996/2). It also contains suggestions for possible action by the COP related to the preparation, submission and review of second national communications from Annex I Parties. Possible revisions to the guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention are contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/1996/9.

C. Possible action by the Conference of the Parties

3. The Conference of the Parties is invited to review progress with regard to its decisions 2/CP.1, 3/CP.1 and 4/CP.1, and may wish to update these decisions as appropriate. For that purpose, it may request the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to prepare a draft decision concerning revised guidelines for the preparation of national communications from Annex I Parties. It may also request the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) to prepare draft decisions taking into consideration the following two paragraphs.

4. Decision 2/CP.1 includes some provisions which relate to the process of submission of national communications. The SBI may wish to take note of these provisions, and, as appropriate, make recommendations to COP 2 with a view to confirming, modifying, and/or supplementing these provisions.

¹ For decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its first session, see document FCCC/CP/1995/7/Add.1.

5. The SBI may also wish to take note of the experience acquired so far with the review process, and make recommendations to COP 2 on the process for the review of second communications. Defining this future process basically along the same lines as for the first round of reviews would allow Parties and the secretariat to build upon the experience gained. However, the SBI may consider some adjustments in the procedure based on the information and suggestions provided in section II below, taking into account the fact that in-depth reviews are time-consuming and require substantial efforts by both Parties and the secretariat.

II. EXPERIENCE WITH THE REVIEW PROCESS

A. Provisions

6. The in-depth review process is established in accordance with decision 2/CP.1 of the COP. The purpose and tasks of the process as defined by this decision are summarized in the annex to this note.

B. Experience

7. The in-depth review process was initiated in March 1995 and is still under way. By the end of 1996, review of all the national communications of Annex I Parties that were submitted before COP 2 should be completed. The previously set goal of reviewing all the submitted communications before COP 2 had to be revised owing to a combination of factors, including the rescheduling of COP 2 from October/November to July 1996, the relocation of the secretariat to Bonn, the large amount of work involved in preparing documentation for the sessions of subsidiary bodies and the COP, and fewer staff resources available to the secretariat than anticipated in the approved budget.

8. The review process is a multistage one which includes agreeing with the host country on the dates and programme of a country visit; selecting, in consultation with the chairmen of the subsidiary bodies, team members from the roster of nominated experts; assigning tasks to team members before, during and after the country visit; drafting of parts of the report by individual team members; compiling these parts into a final draft by the coordinator; sending the final draft for comments to the team members; incorporating their suggestions into the draft, sending it to the host country for comments; and incorporating factual corrections made by the host country, final editing and publication.

9. This process is inherently complex and time-consuming. Preparations for a visit usually start two to three months in advance, and the report requires three to four more months to be published. One of the limiting factors is the time needed for Parties to comment on the draft report. It is common practice for the draft to be sent to all the government agencies which took part in the in-depth review, and receiving and compiling their views sometimes created substantial delays.

10. In-depth reviews are aimed at clarifying outstanding issues related to national communications, in particular to inventories of greenhouse gas emissions, policies and measures implemented or planned with the emphasis on their effectiveness and monitoring, projections and effects of measures. In a number of cases, additional information provided to the teams at their request made it possible to reconstruct inventories or identify important measures adopted by a Party since publication of the national communication or not included in it for various reasons. Several Parties with economies in transition indicated that in-depth review visits helped them to mobilize resources and expertise which had not been fully tapped at the time the national communications were being prepared.

11. Without exception, host Parties during in-depth reviews were very open and transparent, willing to present the maximum information requested by review teams or organize additional meetings not included in the programme if there was such a need. If the information requested was not available at the time of the visit, it was forwarded to the secretariat and to team members at a later stage. In some instances this additional information related to events (such as the adoption of legislation or publication of government reports or programmes) which took place after the country visit, thus raising the question whether or not these events should be reflected in the in-depth review reports. This and similar problems were considered by the secretariat in consultation with the Parties concerned on a case-by-case basis.

12. Many Parties indicated that in-depth reviews are a useful exercise which allows them to explain in greater detail than is possible in a national communication the scope of their climate change policies and initiatives, to review for themselves what is being done in their countries to mitigate climate change, to foster inter-agency cooperation and to fill the gaps identified by team members. A number of government officials expressed their wish that the guidelines for preparation of national communications be strengthened and made more explicit, at the same time admitting that the guidelines were difficult to comply with in a number of cases. The suggestions made by host countries' officials during the in-depth review visits are taken into consideration in document FCCC/SBSTA/1996/9. It was frequently emphasized that in-depth reviews allow Parties to better prepare for submission of their second communications and for in-depth reviews thereafter (if it is decided by COP 2 that these will take place).

13. As requested in decision 2/CP.1, in-depth review reports are written in a non-confrontational language. Review teams are not supposed to criticize, make comparisons or suggest policy recommendations. Nevertheless, reports are intended to contain sufficient information to provide an overall assessment of the scope and intensity of national climate change policies.

14. One of the criteria in selecting experts for the in-depth reviews is capacity building, particularly in developing country Parties to the Convention. The secretariat aimed at selecting those developing country experts who already participate or would be likely to participate in preparation of national communications from non-Annex I Parties. The

process is also seen as a confidence building one in which experts, irrespective of their country of origin, be it developing, economy in transition or developed, participate in reviews on an equal footing and share their experience. (See also section III.C.)

15. A number of suggestions were made by host countries concerning the presentation of data to the secretariat. It was frequently mentioned that the submission of information, especially on inventories of greenhouse gas emissions, might be facilitated if a uniform format for presentation of these data in electronic form could be agreed upon among Parties. Some Parties also expressed interest in having access to the secretariat's database on policies and measures reported in national communications.

16. It is envisaged that the results of the first cycle of in-depth reviews will be assessed during an informal workshop scheduled to be held in conjunction with the fourth session of the SBI.

C. Suggested approach to the scheduling, submission and review of second communications

17. Based on the experience with the preparation and submission of first national communications, as well as the review process, the SBI may wish to consider introducing some changes in the process of submission and review of second national communications from Annex I Parties. Some possible options are presented below. The SBI may wish to forward its conclusions on any changes in this process in the form of a draft decision for adoption by COP 2.

18. Option 1. Annex I Parties would be requested to submit their second communications by 15 April 1997 as provided for in decision 3/CP.1. In accordance with Article 4.6 of the Convention, Parties with economies in transition could be allowed a certain degree of flexibility in deadlines for submitting their second communications; these deadlines could be extended to no later than 15 April 1998. The in-depth review process (if maintained by COP 2) would then span a two-year period ending in 1999 with the publication of a full compilation and synthesis report and in-depth review reports or other documents that might be requested by the COP and/or subsidiary bodies.

19. Option 2. A staggered approach to the submission and review of second national communications from Annex I Parties could be taken, comprising, for example, a review cycle spanning a three-year period. Each year, starting in 1997, 12 Annex I Parties (one third of their actual number) would submit their second national communications, which would be subjected to in-depth reviews in the following 12-month period, including publication of in-depth review reports and/or compilation and synthesis of communications or summary reports.

20. Submissions in 1997 would be received mainly from Parties that submitted their first communications in 1994; submissions in 1998 would be mainly made by Parties that

submitted their first communications in 1995 or 1996; in 1999 submissions would be mainly made by Parties with economies in transition, which would take account of the concern they expressed at COP 1 (see FCCC/CP/1995/7, para. 47), as well as by Parties whose first communications have not yet been submitted.² The second cycle of national communications and the reviews would thus be finished in 2000, when a decision would have to be taken on the future review process.

21. In accordance with the suggested approach, Annex I Parties could be requested to submit their second national communications in groups of 12, for example, as follows:

1997: Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America;

1998: Austria, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco,³ Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom;

1999: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia,⁴ European Community,⁵ Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia.

22. Options 1 and 2 could also both start to be implemented one year later, in 1998, to take account, as appropriate, of any relevant elements of the conclusion of the Berlin Mandate process at COP 3.

23. For each option listed above it is assumed that national inventory data on emissions by sources and removals by sinks would still be submitted by Annex I Parties on an annual basis as stipulated in decision 3/CP.1. The secretariat intends to seek further guidance from the subsidiary bodies on the procedure for reviews of second national communications from Annex I Parties at a later stage.

² The following first communications that are due have not yet been received: European Community (due date 21 September 1994), Lithuania (due date 22 December 1995).

³ Monaco notified the Depositary of its intention to be bound by subparagraphs (a) and (b) of Article 4.2.

⁴ Croatia, in its instrument of acceptance, made the following declaration: "The Republic of Croatia declares that it intends to be bound by the provisions of the Annex I, as a country undergoing the process of transition to a market economy".

⁵ Formerly referred to in the United Nations as the European Economic Community.

III. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IN-DEPTH REVIEWS

A. Schedule for the in-depth reviews

24. Table 1 in the annex to this document provides an update on the dates of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, the dates on which the national communications were received following the entry into force of the Convention and the dates of in-depth review visits.

25. So far, 21 in-depth reviews of national communications (out of 33 communications submitted by 20 May 1996) have taken place. Six in-depth review reports and their summaries have been issued at the time of writing. As many in-depth review reports as possible will be completed by COP 2.

B. Reports on the in-depth reviews

26. In accordance with decision 2/CP.1, paragraph 2 (d), summaries of the reports of the in-depth reviews are distributed to all Parties and accredited observers. These summaries are one to two pages in length and are available in the six official languages of the United Nations. The full texts of the reports are available in their original language. These reports including their summaries are also accessible on-line via the World Wide Web (<http://www.unep.ch/iucc.html>) and APC network (Econet, un.fccc conference). In-depth review reports, together with supplementary information provided by Parties during the in-depth reviews and that contained in national communications, served as a basis for the second compilation and synthesis report submitted to COP 2 (FCCC/CP/1996/12 and Add. 1 and 2).

C. Selection of teams

27. Under the guidance of the chairmen of the permanent subsidiary bodies, the secretariat has selected experts for participation in the in-depth reviews from among the names provided by Parties and intergovernmental organizations. In so doing, the aim has been to involve as many Parties as possible, to take due account of the need for various professional skills and expertise, balance environmental and developmental perspectives and the geographical distribution of team members, and bear in mind linguistic requirements.

28. To date, 52 Parties (27 developing, 17 developed, 8 economies in transition) and three countries not yet Parties to the Convention have nominated 192 national experts to participate in the in-depth reviews. In its decision 2/CP.1, the COP invited intergovernmental organizations to make contributions of experts and/or resources, where possible, to assist the secretariat in undertaking the review of national communications. So far, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Energy Agency and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization have provided experts in response to this invitation.

29. According to decision 2/CP.1, experts for the review teams are to be selected from those nominated by Parties and, as appropriate, by intergovernmental organizations. Consequently, experts nominated by countries not Parties to the Convention are not eligible for participation in the in-depth reviews. Nevertheless, the secretariat has included such nominees in its roster of national experts with the intention of involving them in the in-depth reviews when the countries that nominated them become Parties to the Convention.

Annex

PURPOSE AND TASKS OF THE IN-DEPTH REVIEWS

Based on decision 2/CP.1, the purpose and tasks can be summarized as follows.

The review process comprises three phases:

- (a) Compilation and synthesis of all national communications received by the secretariat
- (b) Expert in-depth review of each individual communication
- (c) Review by subsidiary bodies and COP

The purpose of the review is:

- (a) To provide a thorough and comprehensive technical assessment of the implementation of the Convention commitments;
- (b) To review, in a facilitative, non-confrontational, open and transparent manner, the information contained in the national communications;
- (c) To ensure that the COP has accurate, consistent and relevant information at its disposal.

The tasks of the review of first communications from Annex I Parties are:

- (a) To review key qualitative information and quantitative data points contained in national communications;
- (b) To review policies and measures described in national communications;
- (c) To assess the information contained in national communications against Convention commitments, and assess the extent to which progress towards the objective of the Convention is being achieved;
- (d) To describe expected progress in the limitation of emissions by sources and enhancement of removals by sinks of greenhouse gases, on the basis of information contained in national communications;
- (e) To describe expected progress in cooperation to prepare for adaptation;

(f) To aggregate data across national communications with respect to inventories, projections, effects of measures and financial transfers, but without adding up the individual national totals for projections and the effects of measures.

The task of the review teams is:

To produce, under its collective responsibility, a report on the in-depth review of a national communication, written in non-confrontational language, and submit it to the subsidiary bodies.

Feedback from Parties

A draft of the review report should be provided to the Party being reviewed and, as a general rule, revised to reflect any comments the Party might have. Should the Party and the review team be unable to agree on the treatment of a comment, the secretariat will ensure that the comments of the Party are incorporated within a separate section of the summary of the review report.

TABLE 1. NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS: STATE OF PROGRESS

Annex I Party	Date of ratification*	Communication due date	Communication received date	Review visit dates
Australia***	30.12.92	21.09.94	19.09.94	26-30.06.95
Austria	28.02.94	29.11.94	23.09.94	4-7.12.95
Belarus**	-	-	-	-
Belgium	16.01.96	15.10.96	-	-
Bulgaria	12.05.95	10.02.96	11.03.96	-
Canada***	04.12.92	21.09.94	07.02.94	29.05-2.06.96
Czech Republic***	07.10.93	21.09.94	17.10.94	2-5.05.95
Denmark	21.12.93	21.09.94	01.09.94	14-18.08.95
E.C.	21.12.93	21.09.94	-	-
Estonia	27.07.94	25.04.95	06.05.95	16-17.5.95
Finland	03.05.94	01.02.95	30.01.95	29.1-2.2.96
France	25.03.94	23.12.94	06.02.95	-
Germany	09.12.93	21.09.94	28.09.94	20-24.11.95
Greece	04.08.94	02.05.95	23.03.95	-
Hungary	24.02.94	25.11.94	22.11.94	-
Iceland	16.06.93	21.09.94	04.03.96	-
Ireland	20.04.94	19.01.95	15.11.94	29.01-2.02.96
Italy	15.04.94	14.01.95	04.04.95	-
Japan	28.05.93	21.09.94	20.09.94	3-7.07.95
Latvia	23.03.95	21.12.95	20.09.95	13-14.05.96
Lithuania	24.03.95	22.12.95	-	-
Luxembourg	09.05.94	07.02.95	25.03.96	-
Netherlands	20.12.93	21.09.94	20.09.94	20-24.11.95

TABLE 1. (continued)

Annex I Party	Date of ratification*	Communication due date	Communication received date	Review visit dates
New Zealand	16.09.93	21.09.94	21.09.94	3-7.07.95
Norway	09.07.93	21.09.94	21.09.94	23-27.10.95
Poland	28.07.94	26.04.95	02.02.95	25-29.03.96
Portugal	21.12.93	21.09.94	25.01.95	-
Romania	08.06.94	06.03.95	14.03.95	-
Russian Federation	28.12.94	28.09.95	05.12.95	22-26.04.96
Slovakia	25.08.94	24.05.95	11.10.95	-
Spain	21.12.93	21.09.94	28.09.94	25-29.09.95
Sweden***	23.06.93	21.09.94	20.09.94	13-17.03.95
Switzerland***	10.12.93	21.09.94	21.09.94	11-14.09.95
Turkey**	-	-	-	-
Ukraine**	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom	08.12.93	21.09.94	07.02.94	9-13.10.95
United States of America***	15.10.92	21.09.94	21.09.94	22-26.05.95
Liechtenstein★	22.06.94	22.03.95	24.02.95	-
Monaco ★	24.11.92	21.09.94	25.10.94	-

* For the purpose of this document, all references to ratification include information on accession, acceptance and approval of the Convention.

** Country that has not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention.

*** In-depth review report published (as at 20 May 1996).

★ As stipulated in Article 4.2(g) of the Convention, any Party not included in Annex I may, in its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, or at any time thereafter, notify the Depositary that it intends to be bound by subparagraphs (a) and (b) of Article 4.2. Monaco notified the Depositary of its intention to be bound by these subparagraphs on 24 November 1992. Liechtenstein has not notified the Depositary of its intention to be bound by these subparagraphs.

**TABLE 2. IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM ANNEX I PARTIES
UNDERTAKEN UP TO 20 MAY 1996: COMPOSITION OF REVIEW TEAMS**

Country visit	Origin of experts nominated by Governments			Experts from IGOs*
	Developing countries	Economies in transition	Annex II Parties	
Sweden (13-17 March 1995)	Brazil	Bulgaria	United States of America	-
Czech Republic (2-5 May 1995)	Kenya	Poland	-	-
United States of America (22-26 May 1995)	Philippines	Russian Federation	Sweden	IEA
Canada (29 May-2 June 1995)	Mexico	Czech Republic	Japan	OECD
Australia (26 June-30 June 1995)	Egypt	Slovakia	United Kingdom	IEA
New Zealand (3-7 July 1995)	Sri Lanka	Slovakia	United Kingdom	-
Japan (3-7 July 1995)	Bangladesh Republic of Korea	-	United States of America	IEA
Denmark (14-18 August 1995)	China	Hungary	Italy	OECD
Switzerland (11-14 September 1995)	Mexico	-	France	-

TABLE 2. (continued)

Country visit	Origin of experts nominated by Governments			Experts from IGOs*
	Developing countries	Economies in transition	Annex II Parties	
Spain (25-29 September 1995)	Cuba Mexico	-	Portugal	-
United Kingdom (9-13 October 1995)	Brazil	Slovak Republic	Switzerland	OECD
Norway (23-27 October 1995)	Ecuador	Bulgaria	Australia	OECD
Germany (20-24 November 1995)	China	Latvia	Japan	OECD
Netherlands (20-24 November 1995)	India	Russian Federation	Canada	IEA
Austria (4-7 December 1995)	Ghana*	-	Netherlands	IEA
Ireland (29 Jan. - 2 February 1996)	Kenya	Bulgaria	Norway	-
Finland (29 Jan. - 2 February 1996)	Thailand	Russian Federation	United Kingdom	-
Poland (25-29 March 1996)	Philippines	Czech Republic	Germany	UNIDO

TABLE 2. (continued)

Country visit	Origin of experts nominated by Governments			Experts from IGOs*
	Developing countries	Economies in transition	Annex II Parties	
Russian Federation (22-26 April 1996)	Cuba	Czech Republic	Norway	IEA
Latvia (13-14 May 1996)	Costa Rica	Poland	Finland	OECD
Estonia (16-17 May 1996)	Costa Rica	Poland	Finland	OECD

The teams include a coordinator from the secretariat, who may be assisted by a colleague or a consultant.

* IGO: Intergovernmental organization

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

IEA: International Energy Agency

UNIDO: United Nations Industrial Development Organization

* Paper review